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EDITORIAL COMMENT AND NEWS NOTES

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Committee on International Relations of the National Education Association has established United Nations Information for Teachers. The purpose of this organization is two-fold: (1) to provide practical materials for classroom teachers about international activities; (2) to provide representation for teachers at the United Nations headquarters.

A newsletter giving firsthand information regarding the United Nations is published bi-weekly. The title of this publication is *UNIT* (United Nations Information for Teachers). Suggested topics and instructional methods, examples of successful classroom practices, and available materials are presented in the newsletter.

The organization also selects and distributes pamphlets and audio-visual materials, prepares spot studies and reports, offers assistance in planning conferences, aids in planning teacher exchanges, replies to inquiries, and gives such other help to subscribers as may be requested.

Teachers, unlike other groups working for international peace, have never maintained a representative at the UN. Now a permanent officer represents them at UN. His duties include consulting with educators, UN officials and delegations, gathering firsthand information about foreign study and exchange programs, assisting visiting subscribers, and selecting publications for distribution to the classroom teacher. He also maintains contacts with related organizations, drawing especially upon the experience and resources of the National Education Association.

For further information, teachers and administrators may write to United Nations Education Service, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, 6, D. C.

PLANS FOR REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Groups of elementary school teachers in various parts of the state are developing plans for regional conferences in the education of Spanish-speaking children to be held during the 1952-53 school year. Information presented in a new California State Department of Education bulletin, *Teachers Guide to the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children* (Vol. XXI, No. 14, October, 1952), will be used as a basis for these conferences. Research pertaining to the education of Spanish-speaking children is being conducted in schools enrolling children from homes in which Spanish is the spoken language. It is anticipated that valuable basic data for the improvement of educational programs for such children will be collected through this research.

The first of the regional conferences planned was held at James Lick High School, Alum Rock District, San Jose, on October 4, 1952. Major problems confronting teachers in the education of Spanish-speaking children were used as a basis for discussion. Teachers of the area who are interested in the education and welfare of Spanish-speaking children participated. Regional conferences similar to this one are planned for Oxnard, the San Bernardino-Riverside area, and Los Angeles.

YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

The National Council of State Consultants in Elementary Education has published a bulletin, *Year-Round Programs for Children*, which brings together descriptions of outstanding year-round programs for children being developed under city, county, or state sponsorship throughout the United States. The bulletin has four sections—trends toward year-round programs, trends toward extended employment of school personnel, desirable characteristics of a year-round program, and steps which states can take to promote year-round programs.

Helen Heffernan, Assistant Chief of the Division of Instruction in charge of Elementary Education, California State Department of Education, served as one of the co-chairmen of the committee responsible for the bulletin. Other co-chairmen were

from the states of Florida, New York, and Virginia. Miss Hefernan organized and edited the material for publication.

Year-Round Programs for Children is available from Elsa Schneider, Boston House, 1711 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington 6, D.C. Price, 50¢.

WHAT ABOUT LAY ADVISORY GROUPS?

Increasingly, school officials are working with lay advisory committees to build public understanding and confidence in education. In so doing they are promoting working relations of a reciprocal nature for the betterment of the school and the community.

What does an advisory committee do? How is an advisory committee organized? Who serves as members? What cautions are to be observed when organizing a lay advisory committee? How is its function related to that of the school board, superintendent, principals, and teachers? These and other questions are answered in a pamphlet titled *Lay Advisory Committee*, published by the American Association of School Administrators, a Department of the National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C. Price, 25¢.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

In the light of efforts now being made in California to establish standards for a minimum educational program, a bulletin entitled *Evaluative Criteria and Standards*, published by the Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools, is of particular interest. The standards which it presents were established to serve in enforcing Act 401, Pennsylvania State Legislature (June 25, 1947), which provided for "the licensing and regulation of private schools, conferring powers and imposing duties on the Department of Public Instruction . . ."

The bulletin represents the result of several years' work in the field of evaluating nursery, kindergarten, and elementary school work. A number of consultants including representatives from Boston, Harvard, and Temple universities and the University of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Office of Education, and various professional organizations helped develop the bulletin.

PARENTS LEARN ABOUT EARLY ADOLESCENCE

To help parents understand early adolescence and to recognize normal, healthy behavior in children at this age is the purpose of the *Handbook for Parents of 7th and 8th Grade Students*, prepared by the Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, Contra Costa County. One of the chief purposes of the handbook is to reassure parents on certain phases of early adolescence and to point out that eleven- to fourteen-year-olds have characteristics in common—that there are some things they do, or do not do, just because they are that age. In addition, the handbook explains the role which the school plays in the life of the teen-ager and emphasizes the importance of co-operation between home and school.

NEW CIVICS TEXTBOOK ADOPTED

Living in Our Democracy, by Vanza Nielsen and Homer Ferris Aker, published by the Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1951, was adopted by the State Board of Education on the recommendation of the State Curriculum Commission as a basic textbook in civics for grade eight on April 24, 1952. The adoption, which becomes effective on July 1, 1953, is for a period of not fewer than six years nor more than eight years.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Teachers Guide to the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children. Prepared by the Staff in Elementary Education. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXI, No. 14, October, 1952. Pp. x + 86.

The introductory chapter of this teachers guide deals with the background and history of the Mexican people in California in a manner that makes apparent many of the underlying causes of the problems they encounter. Other chapters indicate the need of Spanish-speaking children for opportunity to participate in a sound educational program that is adjusted to their background and geared to their ability; methods of instruction that can be employed to help Spanish-speaking children become proficient in the use of English; procedures that may be followed by school personnel in working with the parents of Spanish-speaking children; and the values that can be secured for Spanish-speaking children through the school and other agencies that offer worth-while services working co-operatively.

In teaching Spanish-speaking children, teachers must assume the following responsibilities. They must induct the Spanish-speaking child into a new language and culture without violating his need for security; respect the culture of the child and at the same time help him and his parents to move into the dominant culture of their environment; help the child's parents to recognize the values of education for their children; and help the majority group to understand and to accept Spanish-speaking people in the life of the community.

Teachers and school administrators will find this guide helpful in their endeavor to provide Spanish-speaking children the educational opportunity they need to develop as good American citizens.

Teachers Guide to the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children has been distributed without charge to California county and city superintendents of schools and superintendents of elementary school districts. Superintendents of schools may request from the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications copies for the teachers of Spanish-speaking children. Copies of the bulletin may be purchased for 50 cents.

Faith Smitter. *Needs of Rural Children and Youth in California*. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXI, No. 10, July, 1952. Pp. vi + 34.

This bulletin presents certain results of a two-year study of rural life and education in California that was completed by members of the elementary education staff of the California State Department of Education under a subvention from the Rosenberg Foundation. A picture of the social and economic phases of rural life that must be considered in planning to meet the needs of rural children and youth is presented. Certain of the educational problems that evolve from these environmental conditions are indicated. Procedures that have been used successfully in formulating solutions for the different types of problems are described.

Copies of this bulletin were distributed without charge to city and county superintendents of schools, superintendents of elementary school districts, principals of elementary schools and junior high schools, and directors and supervisors of instruction. Additional copies for school personnel may be secured by superintendents of schools providing they will forward their requests to the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications. The purchase price of the bulletin is 25 cents.

Camping and Outdoor Education in California. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXI, No. 3, March, 1952. Pp. vi + 50.

Outdoor education and school camping programs that have been conducted successfully in thirteen California school districts are described in some detail in this bulletin, and the legal authorization for conducting programs of camping and outdoor education are set forth. The bulletin was planned by a committee of staff members of the state departments of Natural Resources and Education. Carson Conrad, Consultant in Recreation in the Bureau of Health Education, Physical Education, and Recreation, California State Department of Education, acted as chairman until his recall to the Air Force. His successor, Louis E. Means, completed the report. The expense of publishing the bulletin was borne chiefly by the W. K.

Kellogg Foundation, with the assistance of the State Department of Natural Resources.

The bulletin has been distributed without charge to county, city, and district superintendents of schools. Superintendents may request of the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications additional copies of this bulletin for school personnel working in camping and outdoor education programs. The purchase price is 50 cents.

California School Lunch Guide. Prepared by the School Lunch Program Staff of the California State Department of Education. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXI, No. 8, June, 1952. Pp. x + 198.

This publication presents valuable information for schools that have under consideration the establishment of lunch programs, those that are planning lunchroom facilities, and those that are operating lunch programs. Information regarding all phases of the lunch program as it is operated in California schools is clearly and concisely presented. Topics such as the National School Lunch Program, housing requirements, equipment, securing, storing, preparing, and serving food are discussed in considerable detail. There are also a number of suggested procedures for making the school lunch program an integral phase of the school curriculum.

The guide has been distributed without charge to principals of elementary and secondary schools that are participating in the school lunch program. Additional copies needed for lunchroom personnel will be distributed as requests for them are presented by superintendents of schools to the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications. The bulletin may be purchased for 75 cents.

Evaluating Pupil Progress. Prepared by Henry W. Magnuson, Chief; Carl A. Larson, Consultant; [and] Thomas A. Shellhammer, Consultant, Bureau of Education Research, California State Department of Education. Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol. XXI, April, 1952. Pp. viii + 184.

The part that evaluation plays in the program of instruction is made apparent by this publication. Ways in which appraisals of pupils' accomplishments can be used to advantage are indicated. Devices that have been used successfully in making the appraisals are presented.

School administrators, curriculum directors, supervisors of instruction, and classroom teachers will find in this publication information regarding the use of evaluation as a basis for continuous curriculum development, adapting instruction to the needs of each pupil, and providing remedial instruction. They will find devices that can be adapted for use in evaluating the growth of pupils in all types of classroom situations. They will also find worth-while suggestions regarding ways in which appraisals of pupil growth can be so made that they will serve as motivating forces for further growth.

The bulletin has been distributed without charge to county, city, and district superintendents of schools, school principals, and supervisory personnel. Superintendents of schools may request the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications to send them additional copies of the bulletin for use by school personnel responsible for the evaluation program. The purchase price of the bulletin is 75 cents.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT NONPROMOTION¹

Although the movement to divide elementary schools into grades began early in the nineteenth century, it was not until about 1840 that the period of elementary education was fixed as eight years and elementary schools were divided into eight grades. Academic standards for each grade were then established. Pupils were assigned to the grade above the one in which they had met the established standards. Their progress depended upon their ability to meet the standards of the grade to which they were assigned. If a teacher held the opinion that they had failed to meet the standards, they were required to repeat the work for the full year before they could expect to be promoted.

Many flaws were soon discovered in the grade-standard plan. Suggested plans for their correction became numerous. These plans made a variety of provisions, including (1) semiannual promotions, (2) departmentalized instruction, (3) multiple-level standards for each grade, (4) remedial teaching, and (5) individualized instruction. Shortly after World War I the testing movement gained momentum, since it provided objective data as a basis for promotions. But regardless of this innovation, there remained the problem of nonpromotion.

Many schools have now adopted a policy of continuous progress for all pupils. This policy is based on the theory that each pupil does his best work when he is working with others of his age. It conforms with proved theories of child growth and development. In adopting this policy, schools assume responsibility for providing at each grade level the type of instruction and the

¹ Based on a study made at the University of California, Los Angeles, 1950 Summer Session Practicum on Supervision, under the direction of Helen Heffernan, Assistant Chief, Division of Instruction, California State Department of Education. The following members of the Practicum presented the research as a panel discussion: Edith Gilbertson, Consultant in Art, Bellflower Public Schools; Edward Greenblatt, Teacher, Manhattan Beach Public Schools; Florence Henman, Consultant in Elementary Education, Merced County; and James A. Hills, Principal, Rio Linda Elementary School, Chairman.

kind of experiences that will assure each pupil maximum growth and development.

STUDIES OF NONPROMOTION

Frequency of Nonpromotion

How much nonpromotion exists in elementary schools? Studies of the extent of nonpromotion have been made during the past forty years, with certain interesting revelations.

Caswell, in his study of the rate of nonpromotion in seven states, found that promotion practices differed widely among the states. The two western states studied, California and Utah, had the lowest rates of nonpromotion; Virginia had the highest per cent of nonpromotion, 16.7, as compared with Utah, the lowest, 4.9 per cent.

Caswell comments on these data as follows:

. . . This is a surprisingly wide variation. . . . That the percentage of children who are not promoted in Virginia should be three times the percentage not promoted in Utah is indeed a striking fact. Obviously, promotion practices differ significantly among states. . . . It is worthy of note that the two western states in the list are lowest in the amount of non-promotion while the eastern states are highest.²

In this study of nonpromotion, which included the elementary schools of 37 cities, Caswell found the rate of nonpromotion ranged from 2.3 per cent in Long Beach, California, to 16.7 per cent in Nashville, Tennessee.³ Among the schools of a given city, he found that nonpromotion ranged from 0 to 24 per cent in 30 elementary schools in Trenton, New Jersey; from 3 per cent to 33.7 per cent in nine schools in Santa Monica, California; from 0 to 23 per cent in 34 schools in Lynn, Massachusetts; from 3 per cent to 35 per cent in 561 schools in New York City.⁴

The highest rate of nonpromotion is in the first grade, where it averages as low as 10 per cent in some school systems and as

² Hollis L. Caswell, *Non-promotion in Elementary Schools*. Field Studies, No. 4. Nashville: Division of Surveys and Field Studies, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1933, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

high as 25 per cent in others.⁵ There are no natural factors known that cause this condition. But there is a possibility that it results from the failure of school personnel to follow a philosophy of education in which full consideration is given to the principles of child growth and development.

There is a larger per cent of nonpromotion among boys than among girls. This is frequently explained on the basis of the assumption that girls are more intelligent than boys. Rose makes the following statement regarding the comparative intelligence of girls and boys:

On the basis of mental capacity, educational age, and the ability to do school work as determined in a series of standardized tests the boys are equal or superior to the girls. The basis of promotion has not been calculated on the above factors. There is a different standard of promotion for boys and girls.⁶

A study of pupils' records in several schools, according to Rose, gave many illustrations of girls being promoted although they had lower achievement scores than boys who were failed. One study was made of a boy and a girl. Both were above average for their grade. Both were of average ability. They were in the same class taught by the same teacher. If any difference in achievement existed, it favored the boy, but only the girl was promoted. Obviously considerations other than achievement entered into this decision.⁷

In Caswell's study, data were secured concerning the nonpromotion of boys as compared with girls in the elementary schools of seven cities. In every instance the per cent of boys who failed to be promoted exceeded the per cent of girls. In Long Beach, California, 3 per cent of the boys and 1.7 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Watertown, Massachusetts, 6 per cent of the boys and 3 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Holyoke, Massachusetts, 7.7 per cent of the boys and 5.5

⁵ Willard S. Elsbree, *Pupil Progress in the Elementary School*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1943, pp. 7-9.

⁶ Marion M. Rose, "Promotion and Failure as Affected by Sex." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1928, p. 112.

⁷ *Ibid.*

per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Newburgh, New York, 7.9 per cent of the boys and 5.8 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 8.8 per cent of the boys and 5.5 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 14.6 per cent of the boys and 10.5 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted; in Nashville, Tennessee, 20.1 per cent of the boys and 13.2 per cent of the girls were nonpromoted.⁸

What is the trend in nonpromotion? Statistics clearly indicate that pupil failure has been greatly reduced in recent years. In 1909, Ayres reported that the average rate of nonpromotion for all grades was 16 per cent.⁹ In 1933, Caswell found that the average rate of nonpromotion was 10 per cent.¹⁰ In 1941, Saunders reported a decrease from 8.7 per cent to 4 per cent in the non-promotions in seven large cities in the period from 1920 to 1940.¹¹ These studies, covering a period of more than 40 years, show that the per cent of nonpromotion is being lessened.

The grade-standard theory has not been abandoned but achievement standards have been modified, trial promotions increased, and pupils promoted who have worked up to their capacities. But the present philosophy of many educators remains based on the idea that pupils should be compelled to master the subject matter for the grade before being admitted to the next higher grade, even if it takes more than one year to do it.¹²

Reasons for Nonpromotion Reported by Teachers and Administrators

One of the earliest investigations concerning the causes of the nonpromotion of pupils was made in 1910 by eight committees

⁸ Caswell, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁹ Leonard P. Ayres, *Laggards in Our Schools* (Russell Sage Foundation Publication). New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1909.

¹⁰ Caswell, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-25.

¹¹ Carleton M. Saunders, *Promotion or Failure for the Elementary School Pupil?* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.

¹² Elsbree, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9.

which included in their membership forty New York City elementary school principals. The twelve causes of nonpromotion which they listed follow:

1. Irregular attendance
2. Truancy
3. Late entrance to school
4. Ignorance of the English language
5. Transfer from school to school
6. Physical defects
7. Sluggish mentality
8. Prolonged absence of teachers
9. Excessive size of classes
10. Varying standards of rating pupils
11. Inefficient teaching
12. Improper methods of promotion¹³

Saunders, in referring to the 1931 study of the National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, made the following statement:

In 1931 the N.E.A. Department of Superintendence conducted an investigation in which over 500 school superintendents replied to the question: What are the bases for pupil promotion in your school system? The replies indicated that promotion from the kindergarten to the first grade was based largely on chronological age, the teacher's judgment and mental age, while from the first to the second grade promotion was based mainly on reading ability, teacher's judgment, and educational achievement. Above the second grade the acquisition of subject matter was the main requisite for promotion. By implication the lack of achievement in subject matter and inadequate mental or chronological age appeared to have been the chief causes of nonpromotion of elementary school pupils.¹⁴

Henry J. Otto interviewed 38 elementary school principals regarding their beliefs as to the values of nonpromotion. The number and per cent of principals who made each response are as follows:¹⁵

¹³ New York City Schools, *Superintendent's Report for the Year Ending July 31, 1910*. New York: City Board of Education, 1910, p. 11.

¹⁴ Saunders, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵ Henry J. Otto, *Elementary School Organization and Administration*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1944, p. 249.

	<i>Principals</i>	
	Number	Per cent
1. Assures mastery of subject matter.....	13	34
2. Disciplines the lazy child.....	11	29
3. No values	11	29
4. Adjusts the immature child.....	9	24
5. Helps retrieve losses due to absence....	4	11
6. Gives dull child more time.....	3	8
7. Maintains morale or standards.....	1	3

The following list of the causes of nonpromotion of elementary school children in various research studies was reported by Saunders.

I. Insufficient Achievement

Previous preparation or in keeping abreast of the class

II. Inadequate Mentality

- A. Sluggish mentality or mental incapacity
- B. Lack of ability

III. Insufficient Attendance

- A. Truancy
- B. National and religious holidays

IV. Imperfect Health

- A. Physical defects
- B. Ill health
- C. Faulty eyesight or hearing
- D. Diseased adenoids
- E. Inadequate diet
- F. Undernourishment
- G. Nervousness
- H. Poor muscular co-ordination

V. Out-of-school Causes

- A. Late entrance to school
- B. Ignorance of the English language, poor home conditions, poor home study habits, and outside activities
- C. Domestic trouble
- D. Moving about

VI. Lack of Emotional Stability

- A. Timidity
- B. Immaturity
- C. Uneven temperament
- D. Poor attitude
- E. Dislike of subject
- F. Dislike of the teacher
- G. Dislike of the school

VII. Inappropriate Administrative Practices

- A. Carelessness and indifferences of the pupils
- B. Lack of interest and application
- C. Poor school study habits
- D. Overwork of pupils
- E. Double promotions
- F. Too frequent transfers
- G. Excessive size of classes and over-large registers
- H. Unsatisfactory textbooks
- I. Double-session programs
- J. Insufficient school time
- K. Delayed examinations
- L. Too high standards or varying standards of rating pupils
- M. Teachers' subjective judgments
- N. Full-time special schedule
- O. Lack of balance in teaching strength of the grades
- P. Inadequate number of substitute teachers
- Q. Inefficient teaching and faulty courses of study
- R. Uniform courses of study
- S. Failure to provide financial resources to fill normal vacancies speedily ¹⁶

Examination of Reasons for Nonpromotion

Saunders sets forth the purpose of promotion and that of non-promotion as follows:

The fundamental purpose of promotion may be stated as provision of opportunities for experiences to ensure the child maximum social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and moral growth. Non-promotion may be considered to be justified only when it permits the

¹⁶ Saunders, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25.

pupil to profit from repeating a grade. Does non-promotion provide the pupil with these benefits?¹⁷

The reasons for nonpromotion set forth by teachers and principals, when examined on the basis of the foregoing purposes, reveal pertinent information.

I. Insufficient Achievement. Grace Arthur, in a study of 60 repeaters of the first grade, discovered that the average repeater did not learn more in two years than the average nonrepeater of the same mental age learned in one year.¹⁸

In a study of repeaters in grades above the first, McKinney reported that only 35 per cent of the repeaters actually did better work the second time, 53 per cent did not improve, and 12 per cent did poorer work.¹⁹

In 1911 Keyes released a study covering seven years in a school district enrolling approximately 5,000 pupils. Analyses of work done by the pupils led him to conclude that repeating a grade does not result in any permanent improvement of the scholarship of the retarded pupil. Of the whole number retarded, 20 per cent did better, 39 per cent showed no change, and 40 per cent actually did worse.²⁰

Buckingham found in experimenting with several thousand Illinois school children that only about one third did better work after repeating the grade, while two thirds showed no improvement and many children did poorer work.²¹

A study was made in the Long Beach Public Schools in 1927-28. Two groups of potential failures were equated. One group repeated the grade and the other was promoted on trial. Educational tests were given both groups in February and again in June. All tests were given and scored by trained research

¹⁷ Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁸ Grace Arthur, "A Study of the Achievement of Sixty Grade I Repeaters as Compared with That of Nonrepeaters of the Same Mental Age," *Journal of Experimental Education*, V (December, 1936), 203-5.

¹⁹ B. T. McKinney, "Promotion of Pupils a Problem of Educational Administration." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1928.

²⁰ Charles Henry Keyes, *Progress Through the Grades of City Schools*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1911.

²¹ Burdette Ross Buckingham, *Research for Teachers*. New York: Silver Burdett & Co., 1926.

workers. It was found that the children of normal ability gained more from trial promotion than the children of equal ability who repeated the grade. Children of less than average ability gained little more by repeating the grade than they did by a trial promotion.²²

From this research it is evident that children do not learn more by repeating a grade, but actually make less subject matter achievement than if they are promoted.

II. Inadequate Mentality. Many teachers reason that promotion of certain pupils is unwise because the pupils are not ready for the work of the next higher grade. An investigation made by Farley, Frey, and Garland showed that children with low IQ's who had repeated several grades were not doing so well in their schoolwork as children of the same ability who had been kept with those of approximately their own age. Nonpromotion was more apt to be a deterrent than an impetus to acceptable achievement.²³

III. Insufficient Attendance. While insufficient attendance is frequently given as a cause of nonpromotion, little evidence is available regarding the extent of absence before nonpromotion is incurred.

Keyes found that when children were absent from 25 to 45 days, as many of them succeeded in keeping up with their class as failed or fell behind. Robinson found that children of average intelligence or better, if given the opportunity, made up as much as 50 per cent of the work missed by being absent.²⁴

Numerous studies demonstrate that many truants are individuals with low IQ's. Out of 110 truants, McElwa found that 97 were retarded because the reading of their grade was too difficult. Truancy was an escape from an embarrassing school situation.²⁵

²² Vivian Klene and E. P. Branson, "Trial Promotion Versus Failure," *Los Angeles Educational Research Bulletin*, VIII, 5 (January, 1929), pp. 6-11.

²³ Eugene S. Farley, Albin J. Frey, Gertrude Garland, "Factors Related to the Grade Progress of Pupils," *Elementary School Journal*, XXXIV, 3 (November, 1933), 186-93.

²⁴ Saunders, *op. cit.*, 26ff.

²⁵ Edna Willis McElwa, "A Study of Truants and Retardation," *Journal of Juvenile Research*, XV (July, 1931), 209-14.

Brill found that misgrading was the motive for truancy and disturbing behavior in the classroom in 50 per cent of the cases studied.²⁶ Little clear-cut evidence is available concerning the validity of absence as a cause of nonpromotion.

IV. Imperfect Health. Ayres found that children who suffered from physical defects made approximately 9 per cent less progress than those with no physical imperfections. Where ill health is due to such causes as poor eyesight, adenoids, defective tonsils, glands, teeth, and the like, the remedy lies either with the home or with the school through staffs which include doctors, dentists, nurses, or through referral of cases to available social agencies of the community.

When poor health causes the child to miss part of the school year, the problem becomes one of "insufficient attendance"; when it affects the mentality of the child, the problem becomes one of "inadequate mentality."²⁷

V. Out-of-school Causes. More scientific evidence is needed in this field. If out-of-school conditions—such as ignorance of the English language, poor home conditions, poor home study habits, outside activities, domestic troubles, and moving about, which cause maladjustments of the pupil—are adequately investigated and analyzed by the school, the home, and the social agencies of the community, there is reason to believe that such situations can be eliminated as causes of nonpromotion in the elementary school.

VI. Lack of Emotional Stability. The effect of nonpromotion on the emotions of a child is discussed in section VII.

VII. Inappropriate Administrative Practices. Inappropriate administrative practices probably are responsible for the largest number of school failures. Ayres, in a study of 3715 children not promoted in grades 4, 5, and 6 of the Seattle public schools in 1922-23 found that low mentality, school study habits, pre-

²⁶ Marion S. Brill, "Motivation of Conduct Disorders," *Journal of Delinquency*, XI (March, 1927), 5-22.

²⁷ Fred C. Ayres, "Studies in Administrative Research," *Seattle Public Schools Department of Research Bulletin*, II (1925), 11.

vious preparation, indifference toward school, size of classes, courses too heavy, unsatisfactory textbooks, and double promotions caused 63.9 per cent of the failures. Home environment, home study habits, physical causes, highly emotional temperament, outside activities, and domestic troubles caused 30.4 per cent of the failures. Correct administrative procedure, combined with the co-operation of the home, might have eliminated 94.3 per cent of the causes of the failures.²⁸

There seems little justification for nonpromotion of children on the basis of inappropriate administrative practices which do not give each child opportunity to learn in accordance with his individual need and capacity.

VIII. Other Purposes or Values Attributed to Nonpromotion. Frequently, claims are made that homogeneity within grades is attained by nonpromotion. Van Wagenen relates the story of an elementary school principal who, after 20 years of employing a nonpromotion policy for pupils who failed to meet specified standards, thought he had succeeded in assuring uniform achievement by pupils at each grade level. A standardized reading test was given the pupils in order to verify his judgment. Results showed that a range of five years of achievement existed in the third grade and nine years in the eighth grade. Van Wagenen concluded that it was impossible to secure uniformity of pupil achievement in several subjects or within a single subject by nonpromotion.²⁹

What are the facts regarding the relation of nonpromotion to the variability of achievement in grade groups? Caswell reports a study made in a city that has a high rate of nonpromotion and which assigns as the reason the maintenance of grade standards as follows:

For example, in a VI-A class of 28 pupils, 50 per cent had made slow progress. Three pupils had failed once, five had failed twice, two had failed three times, and two had failed six times. One pupil had a mental age of nine years and three months, and another had

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹ Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

a mental age of thirteen years and six months. In reading, one pupil achieved only as well as an average beginning Grade IV pupil, another achieved considerably better than an average Grade X pupil. Similar spreads were found in spelling, English and arithmetic. It seems possible that variations would have been no larger if the children had simply been promoted year by year.³⁰

Akridge, who made a study similar to Caswell's regarding the effect of ordinary promotion policies upon pupils, stated that if all the children observed in his study had been promoted, the range of scores on standardized tests would not have been increased, nor would the average score of groups classified on a basis of chronological age have been lowered.³¹

Nonpromotion has been used as a disciplinary measure. In an experiment with two equated groups of pupils in grades 3A to 5A, Otto and Melby found that the group in which the members were told throughout the semester that they would not pass unless they worked diligently did not do better than the pupils in the group that were told they would be promoted regardless of their efforts.³²

After a survey of all available data, Saunders was led to the following conclusions:

- a. Nonpromotion of pupils in order to assure mastery of subject matter is not a justifiable procedure. Many pupils who are not promoted learn less than they would had they been advanced to the next grade.
- b. Nonpromotion does not result in homogeneity of achievement within a grade.
- c. Nonpromotion cannot be justified in terms of discipline administered to the child or to his parents.
- d. Nonpromotion usually intensifies emotional instability of children.

³⁰ Caswell, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8.

³¹ Garth H. Akridge, *Pupil Progress Policies and Practices*, Teachers College Contributions to Education No. 691. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937, pp. 23-6.

³² Henry J. Otto and Ernest O. Melby, "An Attempt to Evaluate the Threat of Failure as a Factor in Achievement," *Elementary School Journal*, XXXV, 8 (April, 1935), 588-96.

e. Nonpromotion because of inadequate mentality, insufficient attendance, imperfect health, or lack of emotional stability is not based on valid reasons.

f. Nonpromotion is an admission of inefficient teaching, inappropriate administrative practices, and inadequate educational planning.

g. Nonpromotion has no place in a school in which children are properly motivated and work to the limit of their individual capacities. Children who do not work to such a degree show signs of maladjustment, which should become a challenge to the school, to the home, and to the community.³³

The Results of Nonpromotion

If the supposed values and objectives of nonpromotion are not attained, what then does happen to repeaters?

1. The incentive to learn is lost. Charles S. Meek, when superintendent of the public schools in Boise, Idaho, made a study of the pupils in his schools who were not promoted. Meek's conclusion follows:

A study of the performance of the failures in Boise has convinced the entire force that the repeater is generally a quitter and does about as poor work in his second attempt as in his first trial at the work of a given grade. The stamp of disapproval has been placed upon him. He starts on his second attempt with a grievance against the teacher and the entire institution. The parents as well as the child feel injured, so that the teacher must combat both the antagonism of the home and the hostility of the pupil, who has been trained for failure and not for success, and who becomes either morbidly sensitive or brazenly indifferent.³⁴

Caswell states:

Non-promotion is a practice which usually operates with elementary children in violation of both of the afore-mentioned requirements for economical and effective learning. It is practically impossible for an elementary school child to discover relationships between his activities during a semester or year of school work and his failure to be

³³ Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³⁴ Charles S. Meek, "A Study in Retardation and Acceleration," *Elementary School Journal*, XV (April, 1915), 423.

promoted. . . . The elements in promotion are so uncertain, so varied, and so far removed from the activities involved that it is practically impossible for children to make such connections.³⁵

Again Caswell reports:

All things considered, it seems fair to conclude that nonpromotion is more apt to be deterrent rather than an impetus to acceptable achievement.³⁶

2. Nonpromotion results in decreased achievement. Psychologists are generally agreed that economical and effective learning requires that the learner have a purpose that he believes he can achieve, a clear idea of what he needs to do to attain his purpose, and opportunity to observe the success or failure of his activities. Nonpromotion of elementary school pupils often violates these requirements. These violations are indicated not only by reasoned deductions but by the observation of competent educators and by experimental studies, which show that nonpromotion unfavorably influences achievement in school subjects.

Caswell substantiates this point of view as follows:

In Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1929, 34 per cent of the pupils in Grade V were retarded. More than half of these pupils had failed of promotion two or more times. In Nashville, Tennessee, in 1930, 37.9 per cent of the pupils in Grade VA were retarded. Almost two thirds of this group had failed of promotion more than once. In Newburgh, New York, in 1929, 58 per cent of the pupils in Grade V-A were retarded. Three fourths of this group had failed of promotion more than once.³⁷

In a study of retardation in the Merced County schools, Argo cited Paul H. Good, Secretary, Committee on Education of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Washington, D. C., as stating a drop-out study made in Ohio revealed that of 2,000 children who entered the first grade, 643 dropped out before completing high school. The first startling fact was that

³⁵ Caswell, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4.

³⁶ Caswell, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³⁷ Caswell, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

638—all but five—of these drop-outs failed the first grade. Secondly, these 643 failed a total of more than 1800 grades in the first six years of schooling. This means that each of these drop-outs failed every other year for six years. These youngsters learned to fail.³⁸

3. Nonpromotion undermines the personality of the pupil. After long experience as a teacher and principal of Downing School, Cleveland, Ohio, Edith C. Peters sums up the results of failure as follows:

And what of the child? Humiliated, discouraged, bewildered, or worse still, callously indifferent, he listlessly attacks the same old problems which have just caused his downfall. Usually he must unlearn before he can relearn. Lacking proper habits of study and not knowing what part of his unassimilated mass of information is true and what false, he plods or loafes on, without inspiration or hope of success. He lags behind the present class just as he lagged behind the class of last semester, conscious of being outstripped by his juniors, and reacts to the situation with sullenness, indifference, rebellion, or heartache, according to his temperament.³⁹

Sandin, in his study of the effects of nonpromotion, makes the following report:

. . . the conduct of the pupils who had been nonpromoted less often conformed with accepted standards. Thus, they were more likely to receive criticism, reproof, and punishment than their regularly promoted classmates.

The more common forms of misbehavior during school hours appeared to consist of whispering, daydreaming, inattentiveness, poking and tripping others as they walked down the aisle, and being occupied with little pursuits when supposed to be studying. . . .

. . . children, as well as teachers, assigned reliably more unfavorable behavior to all slow-progress pupils than they did to all regular progress pupils, both as to behavior likely to be exhibited in relation to school work and behavior in relations with fellow classmates.⁴⁰

³⁸ Clarence Argo, unpublished report on the study of retardation in the Merced County schools, November, 1950.

³⁹ Edith C. Peters, "A Substitute for Failure," *Educational Research Bulletin*, IV (April 29, 1925), 183.

⁴⁰ Adolph A. Sandin, *Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Non-Promoted Pupils*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944, p. 88.

The following statement by Olson indicates the attitudes of regularly promoted children toward nonpromoted children:

Children themselves are inclined to describe the slow progress children as having greater tendencies toward being unhappy, grouchy, quarrelsome, rude and selfish.

Olson also quotes Sandin as finding a mean intelligence quotient of 111 for children who had been regularly promoted; 91 for those who had one year of retardation; 85 for those with two years of retardation; and 76 for those with three years of retardation. The accumulation of overage children through the retention process often makes them the tallest and heaviest children in the room, even though they are not tall or heavy for their age.

Olson continues,

About 85 per cent of the repeaters worried about nonpromotion. Children who had previously been failed reported that their parents had been angry, or else that they had been lectured on the need for studying harder. Brothers, sisters and relatives had criticized their shortcomings.

The threat to security in the home was revealed by the fact that about 48 per cent of slow-progress children indicated that their parents were not satisfied. Failure was a continuous sore point to be brought up for conversation from time to time.⁴¹

Caswell supports the same point of view in the statement that follows:

Non-promotion not only affects unfavorably as a rule the subsequent school work of children, but when repeated, often affects unfavorably their personalities, causing them to develop undesirable defense mechanisms against failure. In a word, non-promotion is a type of failure that tends to deaden, disillusion and defeat the child.⁴²

Bassett, in a study of what happens to a given individual who is the victim of nonpromotion, made the following report of his observations:

. . . His school record showed that he had repeated 1A and 2A each once, and 5A and 6B twice. . . .

⁴¹ Willard C. Olson, *Child Development*, Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1949, 363 ff.

⁴² Caswell, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

In the classroom, Ralph towered head and shoulders above the other youngsters. He was very sensitive about being the biggest boy in the class, felt chagrined that he had to repeat classes, was hopeless about his progress, and had the feeling that he was a failure and would never amount to anything. The other children called him a "dumbbell" and told him he hadn't any sense. He hated school, felt that it was a prison from which he could not escape, and was eager to leave and go to work. . . . The school, instead of recognizing his limited intelligence early, allowed him to fail repeatedly, resulting in the development of a depressed, discouraged attitude. Sensitive about being with younger children, baffled by repeated failure and inability to understand, taunted by his schoolmates, and nagged by his parents for his lack of school success, he struggled along silently, hating the whole procedure. . . .

In the large majority of cases the effects of nonpromotion are apt to be unfavorable. At least the repeated experience of nonpromotion employed in many schools accounts for the almost complete loss of self-confidence, initiative, and self-respect by thousands of children. When such a situation exists and repeated failure is encountered, the individual tends to rationalize his failure and to build up defense mechanisms to explain the situation.

To illustrate, a boy who is a braggart and who continually affirms that he does not care whether he passed his school work has often developed this attitude as a defense against failure. Likewise, listless, day-dreaming boys and girls often use this means of escaping the reality of school work in which they cannot succeed. To such boys and girls success in imagination is preferable to failure in reality. Truancy and disobedience are similarly often employed as defenses against the failure involved in non-promotion. Such rationalized defense mechanisms account for the development of many abnormalities in personalities.⁴³

Robinson made the following statement regarding the effect of nonpromotion on children's attitudes and interests:

Clinical studies of children who have failed show that there is regularly an undesirable effect upon personality development. There is a loss of self-confidence. Self-respect is undermined. The feeling of security, so necessary to mental health is usually materially weakened, feelings of inferiority, which we hear so much about, are

⁴³ Clara Bassett, "School Success, An Element in Mental Health," *The Journal of the National Education Association*, XX (January, 1931), 15, 16.

increased by the experience of failure. We find that the feeling of disgrace engendered by failure, with its associated lessening of self-confidence, interferes with the child's social life; he is on the defensive when he meets his companions; is separated in school from his chum, from the "bunch" or the "gang." . . . The various reasons above also affect his habits of work because he must work without interest, without pride of accomplishment. . . . Failure undermines the child's feeling of security at home. . . . The failure of one child creates a family problem which calls for the best efforts of the parents to handle successfully. The parents are fully justified in objecting to the creating of such a family problem, unless the school has consulted them about the necessity of failure and has given proof that the experience will, on the whole, definitely benefit the child both from the standpoint of academic progress and particularly in his personality development.⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING NONPROMOTION

The following conclusions may be drawn from the research studies of nonpromotion reported in this article:

1. The present rate of nonpromotion shows a downward trend from a rate of approximately 16 per cent to four per cent over a period of thirty years.
2. A significant development is apparent in educational philosophy away from the grade-standard theory to that of fitting education to the needs of the child.
3. Few, if any, of the alleged reasons or values given for nonpromotion are justified or realized in practice.
4. On the whole, the results of nonpromotion are shown to be not greater mastery of subject matter, but less; not greater homogeneity of mental ability in the grades, but greater diversity.
5. Nonpromotion is devastating to the personality of children. It deadens initiative, paralyzes the will to achieve, destroys the sense of security and acceptance in the family circle, and promotes truancy and delinquency.

⁴⁴ Bruce B. Robinson, "Failure Is Too Costly for the School Child," *Parents Magazine*, XI (January, 1936), 22-23.

DOES RETARDATION CAUSE DROP-OUTS?

DONALD E. KITCH, *Chief, Bureau of Guidance, California State Department of Education*

School people are becoming increasingly concerned with the problems posed by children and youth who leave school before completing their full educational program. This concern stems from two strong convictions as to the place of the public school in American society. The first is the conviction that the most important resource of a democratic society is the educability of its citizens. Satisfactory participation in an industrialized culture requires from each individual the development of co-operative attitudes, knowledges, and skills. Young people who leave school before they have acquired this development to the level of their capacity are potential liabilities; their chances of becoming dependent upon society are relatively high.

The second conviction is that the public schools should serve the needs of all children by aiding them in the development of their capacities. Youth who leave school early usually find difficulty in fitting into their communities and frequently have little in the form of personal assets to offer society. The period of frustration and struggle through which these youth pass before they develop personal abilities and skills and reach an age when they are acceptable to employers often leaves its psychological marks upon them. The years of struggle might be spent more profitably in school. Early school leavers usually seem to represent examples of failure on the part of the school to serve the best interests of society and to challenge individuals to seek maximum personal growth.

Studies of individuals who have dropped out prior to their completion of the secondary school indicate that it is difficult to isolate each single factor which is a direct cause of the individual's final decision to withdraw. In a majority of cases, the actual decision to leave comes as the culmination of a series of

experiences which has caused the individual to develop negative feelings toward the school and the members of the school staff. These experiences may occur in the home, in the community, with other youth in the informal life of the school, as well as in the classroom or the school office. It is difficult to say, then, that a single factor such as retardation causes students to drop out of school. It is clear, however, that a positive relationship exists between retardation and the tendency to drop out prior to the completion of the secondary school.

A child who is not successful in completing a specific task such as reproducing with a set of colored blocks a pattern pictured on a card will behave in one of three typical ways. First, he may tend to withdraw from the situation and resist attempts to get him to try the task a second time. Secondly, he may display aggressive reactions such as throwing the blocks on the floor or indicating disapproval of the task and of the person who asks him to perform the task. Thirdly, he may indicate his willingness to make a second attempt. If he has undergone experiences in which eventual success has followed initial failure, he is likely to be willing to try again. If the child's repeated attempts to solve the block problem meet with successive failures, he can be expected to fall back into one of the first two patterns of behavior with even more pronounced attempts either to withdraw from the problem or to remove the threat of the situation through some type of aggressive reaction.

Failure in a grade or subject presents a problem which is not easy for a child to analyze. It is difficult for him to understand the specific cause of his failure and how he can handle the situation in such a manner as to succeed in the future. His reactions are likely to be generalized because he does not understand how to focus his efforts on any particular aspect of his failure and his motivation to try again is likely to be weak unless care is taken to help him understand the exact causes of his failure and to determine the specific things which he can do in order to succeed when he tries again.

The typical reaction to a grade or subject failure, then, tends to fall into one or the other of the first two patterns mentioned

in the preceding paragraphs. The child may become convinced of his inability to meet the expectations of the teacher and his parents and attempt therefore to avoid situations which make his weakness apparent. His tendency to withdraw becomes more pronounced than ever. On the other hand, he may attempt to compensate for his inability to satisfy the vaguely understood expected standards through behavior which is basically aggressive. He may become the class show-off or the playground bully. In either case, his adjustment to school tends to become poorer. His chances for acceptance by his peers are fewer and his opportunity to prove his worth to himself and to his classmates diminishes. School becomes more uncomfortable for him and unless an understanding teacher aids him in working out his problems he can be expected to seize upon the first opportunity to withdraw from school.

The limited data which are available tend to support expectation of a positive relation between retardation and early school leaving. Dillon reports a study of 1,300 drop-outs in five communities in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. Of the 1,018 individuals for whom adequate school records were available, 495 (48 per cent) failed no grades while 523 (52 per cent) failed one or more grades. Of the 523 who failed, 360 (69 per cent of the failing group) failed one or more times in grades one to six. Of the 881 individuals for whom junior and senior high school records existed, 652 (74 per cent) failed one or more subjects in the secondary school years.¹

Cabot recently conducted a study of drop-outs in the Youngstown (Ohio) Public Schools. Of the 1,519 beginning pupils in the group selected for study, 876 graduated from high school while 643 dropped out prior to graduation. The 876 graduates failed a total of 459 semesters, an average of one semester of failure for each two students. In contrast, the 643 drop-outs failed a total of 1,878 semesters, an average of almost three semester failures per student. The incidence of failure among

¹ Harold J. Dillon, *Early School Leavers, A Major Educational Problem*. New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1949, pp. 35-40.

the drop-outs was approximately six times as great as among the graduates.²

Although it is impossible to state with certainty that retardation causes pupils to leave school early, available data seem to justify the following conclusions.

1. Evidence points to a strong positive relationship between grade retardation and early school leaving. Although the specific causes of drop-outs are difficult to isolate and identify, no doubt can exist that grade and subject failures are important factors in the development of the negative feelings toward school which are the basic causes of most drop-outs prior to secondary school graduation.
2. Failure is one of the symptoms of maladjustment to school and is therefore one of the most easily recognized predictors of early school leaving. Every pupil who fails should be looked upon as a potential drop-out.
3. Children who are so maladjusted as to be unable to continue with their age group in school should be made the subjects of careful case studies. Such studies can lead to the alleviation of maladjustment in many cases and thus to a probable reduction in the rate of drop-out.
4. Decisions in regard to the retardation of a child should be made with full regard for the probable consequences. If remaining with his age group will help to keep him in school longer, the child will benefit more than if he is retarded and thus caused to leave school at the first opportunity.

² Michael L. Cabot, personal letter to Donald E. Kitch presenting data quoted here which are being used in connection with a doctoral study at the University of Pittsburgh. Similar tentative findings from this research are quoted by C. A. Christopher, Co-ordinator of Pupil Personnel Services, Youngstown Public Schools, in *Why Do Boys and Girls Drop Out of School, and What Can We Do About It?*, a report of the work conference on Life Adjustment Education held at Chicago on January 24-27, 1950, p. 21. The report is published as Circular No. 269, U. S. Office of Education, Washington 25, D. C.

THE INFLUENCE OF REPETITION OF A GRADE AND OF REGULAR PROMOTION ON THE ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND CHIL- DREN TOWARD SCHOOL

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THE PROBLEM

Since attitudes regarding the public schools concern all people in education, intensive studies of the factors which affect them are timely and important. Attitudes usually reflect ideas which have been widely distributed for readers or broadcast for listeners. But the central determinant of parents' and pupils' attitudes toward school is usually what happens in school. In this study answers are sought to the question, "What are the effects of regular promotion and nonpromotion on children's and parents' attitudes toward school?"

PARTICIPANTS—MATERIALS—METHOD

The schools selected for this study are representative of the urban and rural schools of central and northern California. A total of 1929 fifth-grade and eighth-grade pupils attending the selected schools participated in this study. Of this number, 1339 pupils had been promoted regularly; 590 pupils had repeated one or more grades.

There were 1205 parents of children attending the selected schools who participated in this study. The children of 860 of the parents had been promoted regularly; the children of 345 parents had repeated one or more grades.

Questionnaires were used to gather data for this study. The questionnaires provided opportunities for (1) regularly promoted and retarded pupils to express their attitudes toward school attendance, teachers, and pupils in the same grades; (2) retarded pupils to express their attitudes toward grade repetition; (3) parents of regularly promoted and retarded pupils to express their attitudes toward teachers, school standards, and school practices; and (4) parents of retarded pupils to express their attitudes toward grade repetition.

The questionnaires were distributed by personnel of the participating schools. Parents and pupils who completed the questionnaires were not required to sign their names. Responses to the questionnaires distributed in each school were tabulated and left for the school personnel to study. The responses to all the questionnaires distributed are used in this study.

Some pupils did not answer every question in the sections of the questionnaire which they were supposed to complete; some parents also failed to answer every question in the sections which they were supposed to complete. Since the actual number of responses may differ for each question, they are expressed in per cents so that the responses to a question can be compared with the responses to other questions and interpreted accordingly.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Table 1 shows the per cent of "yes" and "no" responses made by 1929 fifth-grade and eighth-grade regularly promoted and retarded pupils to questions which gave them opportunities to express their attitudes toward (1) school attendance, (2) grades to which they are assigned, and (3) their teachers' understanding and fairness.

A high per cent of all pupils answered "yes" to question 1, but the per cent who answered "no" is sufficiently high to merit attention. Of the regularly promoted pupils, 90 per cent expressed satisfaction with school. Only 87 per cent of the retarded pupils in the fifth grade and 77 per cent of the retarded pupils in the eighth grade expressed satisfaction with school. These data make

TABLE 1

PER CENT OF AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES OF 1339
 REGULARLY PROMOTED AND 590 RETARDED PUPILS TO
 QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL

Questions	Grade V				Grade VIII			
	Regu-larly pro-moted		Re-tarded		Regu-larly pro-moted		Re-tarded	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you like to go to school?-----	90	10	87	13	90	10	77	23
2. If it were possible to stop school, would you like to do so?-----	11	89	17	83	8	92	17	83
3. Do you think most of your teachers help you as much as they should?-----	94	6	89	11	82	18	81	19
4. Do you think most of your teachers really understand you?-----	84	16	77	23	73	27	62	38
5. In what grade would you like to be in school?								
a. The one you are now in-----	70	-----	50	-----	73	-----	56	-----
b. The one below the grade you are in-----	3	-----	2	-----	2	-----	4	-----
c. The one above the grade you are in-----	27	-----	48	-----	25	-----	40	-----
6. In relation to their pupils do you believe that most teachers are								
a. Usually fair-----	86	-----	85	-----	83	-----	76	-----
b. Sometimes fair-----	12	-----	11	-----	15	-----	20	-----
c. Usually unfair-----	2	-----	4	-----	2	-----	4	-----

it apparent that retarded pupils are less likely to be satisfied with school than are regularly promoted pupils. They also indicate that as retarded pupils progress through the grades their dissatisfaction with school becomes greater.

Only a small per cent of the pupils indicated that they would quit school if they had the opportunity, but the per cent of retarded pupils who would quit is somewhat larger than the per cent of regularly promoted pupils who would quit. These data indicate that retarded pupils, more than regularly promoted pupils, tend to seek their satisfactions outside the school.

In answering the third question, a high per cent of all pupils expressed belief that teachers gave them adequate help. But the retarded pupils in both grades and the regularly promoted pupils in the eighth grade gave responses which make it apparent that a relatively high per cent of them are dissatisfied with the assistance which they receive from their teachers. In comparing the data for grade five with the data for grade eight there is indicated increasing dissatisfaction by all pupils as they progress through school.

The per cent of regularly promoted pupils in the fifth grade that stated they believed teachers understand them is greater than the per cent of retarded pupils, also greater than the per cent of either group in the eighth grade that answered "yes." A comparison of the regularly promoted group in the fifth grade with the regularly promoted group in the eighth grade reveals that pupils' dissatisfaction with teachers' ability to understand them increases as they progress through school. A comparison of the retarded groups makes it apparent that as the pupils in them progress in school their belief that teachers do not understand them increases. These data indicate that retarded pupils, more than regularly promoted pupils, are inclined to believe that teachers do not understand them, also that as pupils progress through school there is a growing tendency on the part of all pupils to believe that teachers do not understand them.

Approximately 70 per cent of all regularly promoted pupils expressed satisfaction with the grades they were in; 27 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; three per cent to be retarded one grade. Only 50 per cent of the retarded pupils in the fifth grade expressed satisfaction with their grades; 48 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; two per cent to be demoted one grade. In the eighth grade 50 per cent of the retarded pupils expressed satisfaction with their grade; 40 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; four per cent to be demoted. These data indicate that a high per cent of all pupils would like to be advanced one grade in school, also that retarded pupils are less likely to be satisfied with their school grade than are regularly promoted pupils.

A high per cent of the pupils in both groups stated that they believed their teachers usually accorded them fair treatment. It should be noted that the retarded pupils in the eighth grade were less favorable in reporting their beliefs than were the groups in the fifth and the other group in the eighth grade. A very small per cent of the pupils in any group reported that they believed teachers to be usually unfair.

The compiled data indicate that (1) regularly promoted pupils are better satisfied with school than are retarded pupils; (2) retarded pupils are more critical of school than are regularly promoted pupils; (3) many pupils, both retarded and regularly promoted, would like to be promoted one grade beyond their present grade level; (4) most of the pupils in both groups believe that their teachers are usually fair in their treatment of pupils; and (5) pupils become increasingly critical of school as they progress through the grades.

Table 2 shows the per cent of "yes" and "no" responses made by 590 retarded pupils in the fifth and eighth grades to questions which gave them opportunities to express their attitudes toward grade repetition as it affected their ability (1) to learn, (2) to make friends, (3) to enjoy school, and (4) to retain their courage.

TABLE 2

PER CENT OF AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES OF 590
RETARDED PUPILS TO QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO
GRADE REPETITION

Questions	Grade V		Grade VIII	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did the grade repetition				
a. Make your work harder?-----	49	51	45	55
b. Help you to understand the work better?-----	88	12	76	24
c. Help you to make friends?-----	75	25	69	31
d. Make you discouraged about yourself?-----	46	54	52	48
e. Make you enjoy school more?-----	63	37	43	57

In answering the third question, a high per cent of all pupils expressed belief that teachers gave them adequate help. But the retarded pupils in both grades and the regularly promoted pupils in the eighth grade gave responses which make it apparent that a relatively high per cent of them are dissatisfied with the assistance which they receive from their teachers. In comparing the data for grade five with the data for grade eight there is indicated increasing dissatisfaction by all pupils as they progress through school.

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Approximately 70 per cent of all regularly promoted pupils expressed satisfaction with the grades they were in; 27 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; three per cent to be retarded one grade. Only 50 per cent of the retarded pupils in the fifth grade expressed satisfaction with their grades; 48 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; two per cent to be demoted one grade. In the eighth grade 50 per cent of the retarded pupils expressed satisfaction with their grade; 40 per cent wished to be promoted one grade; four per cent to be demoted. These data indicate that a high per cent of all pupils would like to be advanced one grade in school, also that retarded pupils are less likely to be satisfied with their school grade than are regularly promoted pupils.

A high per cent of the pupils in both groups stated that they believed their teachers usually accorded them fair treatment. It should be noted that the retarded pupils in the eighth grade were less favorable in reporting their beliefs than were the groups in the fifth and the other group in the eighth grade. A very small per cent of the pupils in any group reported that they believed teachers to be usually unfair.

The compiled data indicate that (1) regularly promoted pupils are better satisfied with school than are retarded pupils; (2) retarded pupils are more critical of school than are regularly promoted pupils; (3) many pupils, both retarded and regularly promoted, would like to be promoted one grade beyond their present grade level; (4) most of the pupils in both groups believe that their teachers are usually fair in their treatment of pupils; and (5) pupils become increasingly critical of school as they progress through the grades.

Table 2 shows the per cent of "yes" and "no" responses made by 590 retarded pupils in the fifth and eighth grades to questions which gave them opportunities to express their attitudes toward grade repetition as it affected their ability (1) to learn, (2) to make friends, (3) to enjoy school, and (4) to retain their courage.

TABLE 2

PER CENT OF AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES OF 590
RETARDED PUPILS TO QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO
GRADE REPETITION

Questions	Grade V		Grade VIII	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did the grade repetition				
a. Make your work harder?	49	51	45	55
b. Help you to understand the work better?	88	12	76	24
c. Help you to make friends?	75	25	69	31
d. Make you discouraged about yourself?	46	54	52	48
e. Make you enjoy school more?	63	37	43	57

The per cent of pupils who thought that grade repetitions made their work harder was about the same as those that did not hold a similar opinion. But in answering whether grade repetition helped them understand their work, 88 per cent of the pupils in the fifth grade and 76 per cent of the pupils in the eighth grade answered that it did. Also in answering whether grade repetition made their work more enjoyable, 63 per cent of the pupils in the fifth grade stated that it did. But in the eighth grade 57 per cent of the pupils stated that grade repetition did not make their work more enjoyable. The pupils in both grades were quite evenly divided in their opinions of whether grade repetition discouraged them.

The compiled data indicate that (1) pupils who repeat a grade gain in ability to understand their work; (2) repetition of a grade helps pupils make friends; and (3) pupils who repeat a grade are about equally divided in their opinions as to the effect of the experience.

Table 3 shows the per cent of "yes" and "no" responses made by 1205 parents of pupils to questions which gave them opportunities to express their attitudes toward (1) teachers of their children, (2) their children's abilities, and (3) school practices.

Approximately 75 per cent of the parents of regularly promoted pupils in grades five and eight stated they believed that most teachers understand children and their problems, but only 70 per cent of the parents of retarded pupils in the fifth grade stated they believed teachers understand children and only 66 per cent of parents of the retarded pupils in the eighth grade made similar responses.

In replying to question 2, approximately 90 per cent of the parents of regularly promoted children in the fifth grade stated they believed that teachers helped and encouraged pupils as much as necessary. There was a noticeable decrease in the per cent of parents of regularly promoted children in the eighth grade that expressed the same belief. The parents of retarded pupils were much less inclined to be satisfied with the encouragement and help provided by teachers than were the parents of regularly promoted pupils. There were 28 per cent of the parents of re-

TABLE 3

PER CENT OF RESPONSES OF 1205 PARENTS TO QUESTIONS
PERTAINING TO SCHOOL

Questions	Grade V				Grade VIII			
	Regu-lar-ly pro-moted		Re-tarded		Regu-lar-ly pro-moted		Re-tarded	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you believe that most teachers understand children and their problems as well as they should?	77	23	70	30	72	28	66	34
2. Have most of the teachers helped and encouraged your child as much as necessary?	89	11	72	28	85	15	80	20
3. Do you believe that present day schools produce as good results as when you went to school?	57	43	55	45	60	40	39	61
4. Do you believe that your child is as capable in meeting life situations as most children of his age?	95	5	87	13	96	4	88	12
5. Do you believe that your child will be able to achieve as much in later life as you hope he will?	92	8	86	14	93	7	83	17
6. Do you believe that you have done as much as possible to help him succeed in life considering your circumstances?	93	7	87	13	93	7	93	7
7. Which items of the following, in your opinion, would result in the greatest educational improvement in today's schools?								
a. Stricter school discipline?	50		46		43		53	
b. More drill on fundamentals?	55		47		57		59	
c. Less grade failure	8		20		7		17	
d. More interesting school work?	30		32		28		37	
e. Better teacher understanding of children's problems	31		46		33		37	

tarded pupils in the fifth grade that apparently did not believe teachers helped and encouraged pupils enough. The per cent of parents of retarded pupils in the eighth grade that held a similar opinion was much smaller.

The replies to question 3 make it apparent that parents of regularly promoted and retarded pupils were divided in their opinions regarding the results which present-day schools produce as compared with the results produced by the schools which they attended. The parents of regularly promoted children in the eighth grade recorded the highest per cent that believed present-day schools produce as good results as did the schools which they attended. At the other extreme were the parents of eighth-grade pupils who were retarded. Only 39 per cent of them thought that present-day schools produced as good results as did the schools which they attended.

Parents of regularly promoted and retarded pupils in the fifth and eighth grades responded in similar manner to questions 4 and 5. A high per cent of them expressed confidence in their children's ability to meet life situations as well as other children. And approximately the same per cent stated they believed their children would achieve as much as they expected of them. It should be noted, however, that the per cent of parents of retarded pupils in the eighth grade who expressed such belief was noticeably smaller than for any other group.

An exceedingly high per cent of all parents stated they believed that they had done for their children all their circumstances permitted.

There were 50 per cent of parents of regularly promoted children in the fifth grade who favored stricter school discipline. Parents of regularly promoted pupils in the eighth grade were much less inclined to favor stricter discipline. Only 46 per cent of the parents of retarded pupils in the fifth grade favored stricter discipline; 53 per cent of the parents of retarded eighth-grade pupils favored stricter discipline.

The parents of regularly promoted pupils in the fifth and eighth grades were inclined to favor more drill on fundamentals. There were 55 per cent of the parents of fifth-grade pupils and 57 per cent of the parents of eighth-grade pupils that favored it. Although only 47 per cent of the parents of retarded pupils in the fifth grade favored more drill, 57 per cent of the parents of retarded pupils in the eighth grade favored it.

Only eight per cent of the parents of regularly promoted pupils in the fifth grade favored less grade failure; seven per cent of them with children in the eighth grade held the same position. A much higher per cent of the parents of retarded pupils in both grades stated that they favored less grade failure.

The per cent of parents of regularly promoted and retarded pupils in both grades that expressed themselves as thinking that school work should be made more interesting and that teachers should evidence greater understanding was sufficiently high to merit attention, but the differences that existed between the groups were small.

The compiled data indicate that (1) a high per cent of all parents believe that teachers understand their children and provide them with the help they need to be successful in school; (2) parents of regularly promoted pupils are inclined to believe that modern schools are as good as the schools they attended; (3) parents of retarded pupils are inclined to become more critical of modern schools as their children progress in school; (4) most parents have confidence in the ability of their children and feel confident that they have given them all the help they are capable of providing; (5) parents are equally divided in opinions regarding the extent to which they think school discipline should be made stricter and drill in skills work intensified; (6) parents of retarded pupils are more inclined than parents of regularly promoted pupils to believe that there should be less failure, and (7) there is a tendency on the part of approximately one-third of the parents to think that school work should be made more interesting and that teachers should have a better understanding of pupils.

Table 4 shows the per cent of "yes" and "no" responses of 345 parents of retarded pupils in grades five and eight to questions which gave them opportunities to express their attitudes toward the effect of grade repetition upon pupils' (1) work habits, (2) interest in school, (3) confidence, and (4) ability to make friends.

There were 46 per cent of the parents of retarded fifth-grade pupils who believed grade repetition improved the work habits

of their children, but only 27 per cent of the parents of retarded eighth-grade pupils expressed the same belief. It should be noted that 16 per cent of the parents of fifth-grade pupils believed that grade repetition made pupils more careless, but that only four per cent of the parents of eighth-grade pupils shared their opinion.

TABLE 4

PER CENT OF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES OF 345 PARENTS OF
RETARDED CHILDREN IN GRADES 5 AND 8 REGARDING
GRADE REPETITION

Questions	Grade V	Grade VIII
	Yes	Yes
Do you believe this grade repetition affected him in any of the following ways?		
a. Improved work habits.....	46	27
b. Made him more careless in his work.....	16	4
c. Increased interest in school.....	29	20
d. Decreased interest in school.....	28	7
e. Increased self-confidence.....	27	16
f. Decreased self-confidence.....	19	14
g. Helped him to make friends.....	20	13
h. Made it difficult for him to make friends.....	8	5
i. Had no effect on him.....	12	13

While 29 per cent of the parents of retarded fifth-grade pupils believed that grade repetition increased pupils' interest in school, 28 per cent believed that it decreased pupils' interest. The parents of retarded eighth-grade pupils were more inclined to believe that grade repetition increased pupils' interest in school rather than decreased it, and 28 per cent of the parents of fifth-grade pupils expressed belief that grade repetition increased pupils' confidence, which was one per cent more than thought it decreased their confidence. The parents of eighth-grade pupils were divided to about the same extent, 16 per cent stated they believed that grade repetition increased pupils' confidence and 14 per cent stated they believed it decreased their confidence.

There were 20 per cent of the parents of fifth-grade pupils who believed grade repetition helped the pupils make friends, but only 13 per cent of the parents of eighth-grade pupils expressed the same opinion. Just eight per cent of the parents of pupils in the fifth grade stated that they thought grade repetition made it difficult for pupils to make friends and only 5 per cent of the parents of pupils in the eighth grade stated the same opinion. Approximately 12½ per cent of all parents thought that grade repetition had no effect on pupils.

The compiled data indicate that parents of retarded pupils are (1) more inclined to believe that grade repetition is more helpful than harmful to pupils; (2) divided in their opinions as to whether grade repetition increases or decreases pupils' interest in school; (3) inclined to believe that grade repetition may increase pupils' confidence; and (4) slightly inclined to believe that grade repetition gives pupils improved opportunities to make friends.

In addition to the materials presented in the tables, both pupils and parents expressed some free opinions. For example, when the fifth-grade pupils gave a free response to the question, "What is the most interesting or enjoyable activity in school?" 83 per cent of the regularly promoted group and 67 per cent of the retarded group mentioned reading, arithmetic, or science. The pupils of both groups mentioned playgrounds or sports activities more frequently than they mentioned any classroom activity; the retarded group mentioned playground activities more often than did the regularly promoted group. In the eighth grade 59 per cent of the pupils regularly promoted and 44 per cent of those retarded mentioned classroom activities they liked. Playground and sports activities were mentioned about five times as often by this group as were other activities.

Disliked activities were not mentioned as frequently as liked activities by any of the groups of pupils. Arithmetic was the subject most disliked by both groups, social studies second, and English third. The number of pupils who indicated their dislikes was too small to be of much significance. Frequently both groups of the pupils in the eighth grade stated dislikes of con-

ditions such as "overcrowding," "too large classes," "too much homework," or "lack of equipment," rather than of specific curricular activities. Certain pupils liked everything about their school. Although the pupils' likes and dislikes may not be of much significance, they do reflect attitudes which merit attention.

CONCLUSIONS

The responses of parents and pupils alike tend to verify Tenenbaum's conclusion that attitudes toward teachers may be somewhat more favorable than attitudes toward school generally.¹ The pupils' responses also indicate that the attitudes toward school that are held by older pupils tend to be somewhat less favorable than those held by the other pupils. These results confirm those reported by Jersild and Tasch.²

Previous research has indicated that failing pupils does not increase their academic achievement. Sociometric or other indirect methods of appraising personality and social adjustment indicate that grade retardation may cause pupils to suffer from maladjustment and poor mental health.

Although the findings of this study point to the fact that pupils and the parents of pupils who have been retarded in a grade show more negative attitudes toward school than do pupils who have been regularly promoted and their parents, the differences are not great in most instances. Other research studies have reported greater differences in the problems of adjustment faced by regularly promoted and nonpromoted children and in their attitudes toward school than are reported in this study. This raises some interesting questions. Do direct questions such as those used in this study tend to make people defensive? Are certain children and parents of children who have been retarded saying in effect, "This is the way I wanted it all the time?" Are they defending a somewhat ignominious position by a pretense that it is entirely satisfactory? Or have teachers convinced cer-

¹ S. Tenenbaum, "Attitudes of Elementary School Children to School, Teachers, and Classmates," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, XXVII, 2 (April, 1944), 134-41.

² Arthur T. Jersild and Ruth J. Tasch, *Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.

tain children and their parents that grade repetition is desirable and that it offers many advantages?

The replies of parents and children indicate a generally favorable attitude toward the school program and toward teachers as persons. This attitude is more general with pupils than with parents. Although the differences are sometimes small, pupils who have been retarded and their parents express less favorable attitudes toward school than do regularly promoted pupils and their parents. About half the retarded pupils wanted to be in the grade above the one they were in.

Parents are generally more favorable in their attitude toward teachers than toward school, but on every question the attitude of parents whose children had been retarded was less favorable than the attitude of parents whose children had been regularly promoted. In families in which pupils had failed in school the morale seemed to be lower and the parents seemed to attach less value to grade repetition than parents who had had no experience with the problem.

Previous studies show that repetition of a grade may have unfavorable influence upon a pupil's academic achievement and a bad effect upon his general adjustment. This investigation shows that it also tends to produce enemies for the school—pupils who dislike the school, and parents who are critical of the school program. Free criticism of the school—both favorable and unfavorable—is necessary for its continuous development. The negative attitudes and criticism which result from pupils' failure merit serious consideration by educators, for they provide a basis for constructive action which should result in a program of improved instruction which will in turn make regular promotion a living reality.

GROUPING PUPILS FOR WELL-ROUNDED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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The ideal toward which every good elementary school strives is to provide the physical and social environment which will facilitate maximum growth and development for every boy and girl. It is toward this end that teachers, supervisors, and administrators bend their best efforts.

Newly constructed elementary schools have become modern marvels in providing a safe, hygienic, educationally serviceable environment for children. Modern lighting provides visual comfort and efficiency for every pupil. Radiant heating provides maximum comfort for block building, construction, map making, and resting. Acoustical treatment of walls and ceilings and the use of appropriate floor coverings minimize distracting noises.

In locations where climatic conditions permit outdoor activities for a considerable part of the school year, each classroom has adjacent to it an outdoor area which is equipped for class activities. Sometimes a roof covers that part of each area which is surfaced with concrete or other suitable material. Generally each of these outdoor classrooms is separated from the others by hedges or simple, well-designed fences. If the side of the outdoor classroom joins the playground, the side is also fenced. Within each area there is adequate storage space for wheel-toys, large blocks, and garden and construction tools. Running water is available for gardening, watering pets, cleaning equipment, and other class activities. The modern school provides space in which children have adequate "elbow room," thus avoiding emotional strains and tensions.

The modern elementary school is equipped with the essential materials of instruction. In addition to the usual paper, note

books, pencils, maps, and globes, there is a wide variety of textbooks, library books, reference books, children's periodicals and newspapers; wood, workbenches, and good tools for construction; toys for dramatic play; cloth and materials for sewing; many art materials including finger paints, poster paints, clay, brushes, large sheets of newsprint, easels; large rubber balls, equipment for softball, volley ball, basketball, paddle tennis, badminton, and other games; blocks, packing boxes, barrels, steering wheels; boards for building large structures for creative play; films, slides, projectors, and screens; simple equipment for science experiments and experiences; toy musical instruments, phonographs, records, radios, pianos, and hundreds of other items for children's use and enjoyment.

The provision of an abundant and stimulating environment may seem at first thought somewhat unrelated and tangential to the grouping of children for well-rounded growth and development. As a matter of fact, such environment provides richly for a wide range of individual needs, interests, and abilities. But to take advantage of these provisions, teachers must be released from the responsibility of preparing pupils to meet artificial grade standards. For such standards are based upon the assumption that the needs, interests, and abilities of pupils are enough alike that they should be required to master the curriculum for each grade before being allowed to progress to the next grade. Under this system pupils who fail to complete the work within the year are retained at least a half year to gain the required mastery. Teachers can replace this time-honored practice by providing opportunities for the pupils in each class to work as a group in which they are reasonably well-adjusted to one another where they live and work together in a stimulating environment under the wise and friendly guidance of a teacher who loves and respects each child as a person. The teachers must, however, have abundantly rich environments in which to work and be encouraged in their endeavor by principals, supervisors, and others.

More than 50 years of studying human growth and development in psychological laboratories, child development institutes, and experimental schools throughout the country has established

aging participation in planning, co-operative activities, and social responsibilities.²

Again, Olson supports this point of view by stating that . . . under modern methods of individualization, children have the opportunity to realize their capacity in achievement irrespective of the grade group in which they happen to be classified. The problem seems to be primarily one of happiness and ability to work with a group with comfortable social relations.³

In an effort to secure homogeneity, many schools have established promotion policies based on the grade-standard theory. In such schools, every child entering the fourth grade is given the same arithmetic book regardless of his level of mathematical development. Teachers are supposed to try to bring all the fifth-grade children up to the grade standard in reading, even though they know that the standard is too high for certain children to attain. Teachers may know the principle of individual variation, but school policies regarding promotion and retardation make it impossible for them to utilize their knowledge. Little wonder that they become frustrated in their attempts to work intelligently when there continues to be conflict between the grade-standard theory and our growing knowledge of the varying capacities and needs of children.

Perhaps we should not be unduly concerned about the effect on teachers of the dichotomy between knowledge and practice. They may be able to escape before they become completely schizophrenic. The March, 1951 issue of *Reader's Digest* reports the "Bonanzas in Blue-Collar Jobs." Perhaps there will be a great exodus from the teaching profession into operating elevators, presiding in the "better dresses," or carrying a hod! But even if indifference to the effect of this confusion on teachers can be justified, the effect on children makes it impossible to justify attempts to secure homogeneity by failing them in school.

Jersild states, in the preface to Sandin's study of regularly promoted and nonpromoted pupils, that

² Willard C. Olson, "The Parents Request an Extra Promotion," *Childhood Education*, XVI (September, 1941), 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

. . . Out of the findings emerges a revealing and moving account of dislocations that may occur when academic progress is out of gear with other forces that play an important role in the lives of growing children.⁴

Sandin's study deals with characteristics of the behavior, social adjustments, and attitudes of children who had been nonpromoted one or more times during their school careers as compared with their regularly promoted classmates. The 416 children included 139 slow-progress pupils chosen from sixteen classes, two classes to each grade level from one to eight, of five elementary schools in Wallingford, Connecticut.

The differences between the two groups and the effect on the slow-progress group may be summarized briefly as follows:

1. The slow-progress children were invariably older, generally taller, and usually more mature physically than the normal-progress children. The regularly promoted had an average IQ of 110.8 as compared with 88.5 for the nonpromoted. The range for the slow-progress was 70-119 as compared with 70-154 for the normal-progress. This overlapping in range indicates that homogeneity is not obtained by failing to promote pupils.

2. With regard to social adjustment, the sociometric tests revealed that the slow-progress children indicated that their companions were in higher grades; they wished to be in higher grades partly because of their desire to be with their friends. The study clearly revealed that children like to be with other children who are more like themselves in size, age, interests and degree of social maturity.

3. Feelings of dislike sometimes existed between the slow-progress and regularly-promoted groups because of differences in personal characteristics and interests, because of lack of acquaintanceship, and because of the less-approved behavior of the repeaters.

4. Teachers rated slow-progress pupils less favorably than regular-progress pupils in behavior. Repeaters exhibited anti-

⁴ Adolph A. Sandin, *Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Non-promoted Pupils*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944. Preface, p. v.

social behavior. Slow-progress boys were rated by teachers as unfriendly, cruel, and bullying to others. Slow-progress boys were rated by children as unhappy and grouchy, quarrelsome and disagreeable, rude and impolite, inconsiderate, selfish and boastful. Slow-progress girls seldom received mention of unfavorable behavior but they were mentioned favorably only half as frequently as normal-progress girls.

5. According to teachers the children who had experienced grade failure exhibited more behavior of the sort likely to prove troublesome during school hours. They were inclined to inattentiveness, to daydreaming, to be talkative, to be easily discouraged, to be suspicious and distrustful, sensitive and easily hurt, to be emotionally unstable.

6. Slow-progress pupils worried about nonpromotion, and nearly half the class said that their parents were not satisfied with their school work. They were frequently warned by their parents to work harder or they would not pass; parents and other relatives would not let them forget their failure. Children revealed considerable emotional upset because of nonpromotion. Some cried; some were discouraged; some wished to quit school; some felt that the other children subjected them to criticism and ridicule, and others thought the teacher had treated them unjustly.⁵

The modern elementary school which aims to promote all-round development of children—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual—certainly falls short of its goal as far as these slow-progress children are concerned. Because they were not up to grade standard, they were not promoted; nonpromotion contributed seriously to their personal and social maladjustment. This practice seems unjustifiable in the light of research studies which prove that nonpromotion does not help the child in his academic endeavor. In fact, the majority of repeaters have been found to show no improvement and, in many cases, actually do less satisfactory work after nonpromotion because of the discouragement and lessened morale which accompanies failure. For failure generally lowers the aspiration of children with negative

⁵ *Ibid.*

effects upon their personalities. The relation of grade failure to truancy and delinquency is revealed in many studies. Nonpromotion is obviously out of harmony with the broader purposes of the elementary school.

Grouping in school which permits continuous progress seems to provide the only defensible way to promote the development of healthy personalities. What can supervisors and principals do to promote grouping which meets the individual needs of children? The following are some of the challenges to leadership:

1. Abandon grade standards as measures of achievement in subject matter; help teachers to acquire better understanding of child growth and development, to study the group of children entrusted to the school, and to group them for instruction within the class, using materials adapted to the needs and interests of each small group.
2. Develop the curriculum continuously around worth-while areas of life experience; permit each child to progress at his own rate, and permit each child to make his contribution to group activities in terms of his individual ability and interest.
3. Assign children to the groups in which they can make the best growth; progress will be continuous from year to year for nearly all children. Promotion, nonpromotion, or acceleration will disappear as educational procedures.
4. Consider all aspects of a child's development in placement; select appropriate material for slow learners; enrich the experiences for the intellectually superior; avoid placement which might throw a child out of adjustment to his social group or make him seem inferior in the eyes of his peers.
5. Provide the articulation with the next higher level of the school system so children will have opportunity to benefit by the multicurricular offerings of the secondary school. This involves the acceptance of a common philosophy of education and a better understanding of human growth and development by all persons who work with children and youth in schools.

6. Provide special education opportunities in small classes for extreme deviates—the severely physically handicapped, the mentally retarded, and the emotionally maladjusted.
7. Keep the pupil enrollment to 25 or fewer children in a class to enable teachers to perform effectively their function of individual guidance.
8. Enlist parental understanding and co-operation; help parents to understand the general abilities of the child, not his academic achievements alone; help them to understand and accept his special interests and disabilities; help them to recognize the general maturity of the child, and to foresee his next developmental tasks and his personality needs.

Grouping should be considered by teachers, supervisors, and administrators as primarily an instructional problem. Only in the class group can the child be seen and valued as a total functioning personality. Only as the child reacts to his physical and social environment can the skilled observer come to recognize the significant ways in which he differs from every other child. Only as the teacher understands each child as a person can she guide him to the fullest development of his unique potentialities. The goal of the school is continuous wholesome development of the child.

STUDIES OF THREE CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN RETAINED A GRADE IN SCHOOL

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"Did you pass?" Sharon asked Donna as they left the school at the end of the term.

"Did you pass?" Bill asked his neighbor as test papers were returned.

"Did you pass?" Mrs. McBride asked her son when he came home from school.

For many years parents and children alike have been asking this question. What happens to children who cannot answer in the affirmative? Do they learn more? Are they better adjusted? Does the failure make them work harder?

Numerous research studies of the effects of promotion and nonpromotion upon pupils are available. They reveal information which merits the attention of educators.¹

Research indicates that pupils who enjoy continuous progress in school gain more educationally than pupils with similar abilities whose progress in school is irregular. Contrary to frequently expressed beliefs, nonpromotion does not spur pupils to greater action, but it does discourage pupils to the extent that they see little or no reason to put forth effort.² Research shows success as a greater motivating force than failure.³

¹ Some studies are

Grace Arthur, "A Study of the Achievement of Sixty Grade I Repeaters as Compared with that of Nonrepeaters of the Same Mental Age," *The Journal of Experimental Education*, V, 2 (December, 1936), 203-5.

Walter W. Cook, *Grouping and Promotion in the Elementary School*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1941, p. 48.

Eugene S. Farley, Albin J. Frey, and Gertrude Garland, "Factors Related to the Grade Progress of Pupils," *Elementary School Journal*, XXXIV, 3 (November, 1933), 186-93.

² "Non-Promotion in Elementary Schools—Term Ended January, 1946," Bulletin 567. Philadelphia: Division of Educational Research, Department of Superintendence, School District of Philadelphia, 1946 (mimeographed), p. 2.

³ See *Manual of Child Psychology*, edited by Leonard Carmichael. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1946. Report of studies by Fajans, Wolf, Jack, and Keister, pp. 824-5.

See also Roger G. Barker, "Success and Failure in the Classroom," *Progressive Education*, XIX, 4 (April, 1942), pp. 221-4.

Certain research reveals that pupils who enjoy regular school progress are better adjusted socially and emotionally than pupils whose progress has been interrupted by nonpromotion.⁴ Nonpromotion frequently cause pupils to develop undesirable attitudes and patterns of behavior. It has proved to be difficult for pupils and teachers to correct such reactions, especially when nonpromotion appeared to the pupil to be unfair.

Since it is known that individuals differ, it would be unreasonable to assume that nonpromotion affects each pupil in the same manner. It is possible that certain pupils profit by having their progress in school interrupted. But such grade repetition should be recommended only after a careful study of the individual's problem indicates its advisability.

In this article, the cases of two children who have suffered because of retention in a grade are described. A third case which shows that a child may benefit from retention is also described. These case studies make apparent the effects that nonpromotion may have upon pupils.

How Nonpromotion Affected George

George, a fifteen-year-old, and his brother Henry, a thirteen-year-old, entered Mrs. Bennett's eighth-grade class together. Mrs. Bennett noticed that Henry did most of the talking and that George did as Henry asked or told him to do. George's compliance and submissiveness caused Mrs. Bennett to be concerned about him and interested in exploring his background.

In looking over his cumulative record, Mrs. Bennett found that George, who was unable to learn to read, had been retained in the second grade and Henry, who had entered one year later than George, had been promoted to the same grade. Consequently, they had been together in the same grades for seven years.

⁴ Studies concerning the personality adjustment of retarded pupils are reported in Carleton M. Saunders, *Promotion or Failure for the Elementary School Pupil?* New York 27: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.
Adolph A. Sandin, *Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Non-promoted Pupils*, Child Development Monograph 32. New York 27: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944.

Comments by previous teachers on the cumulative record were as follows:

Grade 1: George appears slow in development but seems to feel secure in the group.

Grade 2: George reads in a preprimer and feels pleased that he can read. Another year should make him much stronger.

Grade 2: George is reading in a primer. Henry helps him a lot.

Grade 3: George lacks self-confidence.

Grade 4: George leans on Henry almost entirely.

Grade 5: George depends on Henry for decisions.

These statements caused Mrs. Bennett to be concerned about George's lack of self-confidence and his dependency upon Henry. As the weeks went by, she observed that the findings of the previous teachers were borne out; George continued to rely on Henry.

Test records showed George's IQ on a group test as 74 and that at the beginning of the eighth grade his achievement scores on a battery achievement test were: reading—5.5, arithmetic—5.8, language—4.4, and a grade score of 5.3. At the beginning of the seventh grade the standardized test results showed a grade placement of 5.0.

George and Henry lived with their mother and maternal grandmother. The mother, who worked in a laundry, was the sole support of the family. In talking with the mother, Mrs. Bennett found that the people at home were often disgusted with George. According to the mother, "George is lazy about things around the house. He does not wash the dishes or clean the yard without my getting after him. Henry, though, does things right away. I tell George that it's a good thing that Henry can look after him at school."

Mrs. Bennett could see that the mother was helping to make George dependent on Henry, that at home and at school he complied with Henry's directions.

George, a Boy Scout, attended weekly meetings of his troop regularly. He was very much interested in the Scout program.

George had a paper route from which he earned money for his clothes, Scout activities, and other expenses. He seemed to do well with it, keeping the accounts and delivering the papers without help from anyone. In this activity, George was on his own. Away from his brother and others with whom he had felt failure, George showed ability to meet a problem and to handle it well.

In the classroom, George would do little without consulting other children.

One day Mrs. Bennett decided to record some of George's behavior. Her account was as follows:

Turned to Henry to find out if he could work on the map. (All children are permitted to do that.)

Asked Dick what his group was to do in arithmetic even though assignment had been explained and was written on the board.

Looked at Dick's paper to make sure he was doing the correct arithmetic.

Talked with Jim to make sure he could help in the equipment room at noon. (George is on the committee for this month. It is the third week of the month.)

When Mrs. Bennett consulted the sociograms of the class, she noticed that as both work and play companion, George was chosen by two people, one of whom was his brother. These two and others used George to run their errands and do other things for them. George became their servant. Following the dictation of others apparently gave him the feeling of belonging he needed.

George had few friends, found school work difficult, was dependent on Henry and one or two other boys. He often stuttered.

In working with George, the speech teacher, too, found him insecure. In the relaxed atmosphere of the speech class, he seldom stuttered. He gave the impression there of feeling at ease and he talked a great deal about his success with the paper route.

In describing his feelings about repeating a grade, George said that it did make him discouraged, that it did not make him enjoy

school, but that it did make him work harder.⁵ Whether comments and remarks by adults had influenced him on the latter statement is something to be considered, for he also said that he would like to be in the grade above the one he is in.

Mrs. Bennett found that George reacted much better to success than to failure. When he could be sure he was doing something right and well, he went ahead with it. Consequently, she tried to be sure that the work he attempted was within his ability, that he got off to a good start, and that he received recognition for a job well done.

During the year, George seemed to develop some independence. He cared for the athletic equipment room by himself and answered the school telephone, taking messages and calling someone else when necessary.

George's behavior seemed to show that retention had not helped his development. If George had been promoted regularly, both his mother and brother undoubtedly would have had more confidence in him. They would not have thought him a failure, and consequently George would have had more faith in himself. As a result of retardation, George is overly dependent upon others and feels himself a failure.

How Nonpromotion Affected Andy

Andy, a good-sized, dark-skinned boy of Mexican-Indian descent, was sitting in the principal's office. There was an expression of failure and unhappiness on his face.

"Now, Andy, I am busy this recess, so you may go outside. Take this arithmetic paper home and bring it back tomorrow. I'll help you then. You can do so much better if you will just try. Run along," were the words of Miss Brown, the principal, as she dismissed Andy.

Andy left with a more dejected attitude and with a longer face than he had had while sitting on the primary chair awaiting the principal's arrival.

Miss Brown then remarked, "Andy could do better. He did not do well on his achievement test so I took him out of the sixth

⁵ "Pupil Questionnaire," developed by the Research Committee, California School Supervisors Association, 1950.

grade and put him back in Mrs. Allen's fifth grade this fall. He isn't a bad boy but he must do better."

Do better in what? His mother, father, and stepfather were born and reared in Mexico. Andy found more use for his native tongue than for English. Spanish was spoken exclusively in the home, for his mother knew only a few words in English. Andy had been successful in reading. His achievement tests showed that he was reading with an ability and understanding of the average child halfway through the fifth grade. His ability as shown on the National Intelligence Test was average. At the time he was forced to repeat the fifth grade, his grade placement was 6.5. He was one and one-half years older than most of his classmates. He was a tall, well-developed boy for twelve years of age. His responses to the embarrassment of demotion followed a pattern of aggression and attention-getting.

On the playground, both at recess and in the physical education classes, Andy was a problem. He showed little interest in playing games with other fifth-grade children, preferring to direct his energies to punching and hitting all those who came within his reach. When he was requested to play, Andy annoyed the other players and upset the game. He would play baseball, for that game he played better than the others.

Mrs. Allen said that the first year she taught Andy he had shown a tendency to give up rather easily, but that before the end of the year he had nearly overcome that tendency. He had learned to apply himself to the tasks before him. His return to the fifth grade, a class of boys and girls a year or more younger than he, brought a decided change in his behavior. Andy used every opportunity to punch, poke, or in some way distract those around him. He gave little attention to his work or the problems before the group unless it afforded him an opportunity to hold the center of the stage. This he would accomplish by constant talking and giving others little or no opportunity to participate in the conversation.

During the spring of the second year Andy was in the fifth grade, sociograms of his class were made. Through these it was

planned to secure information concerning his acceptance or rejection by his classmates.

On the work-companion sociogram, Figure 1 shows the fact that of the eleven girls and twelve boys in the class, only Ed chose to work with Andy. Andy had gained little respect from his classmates as a working companion. His desires for attention and recognition left others with no opportunity to express themselves. His lack in application had taught others that he could not be depended upon to accomplish the objectives of the group.

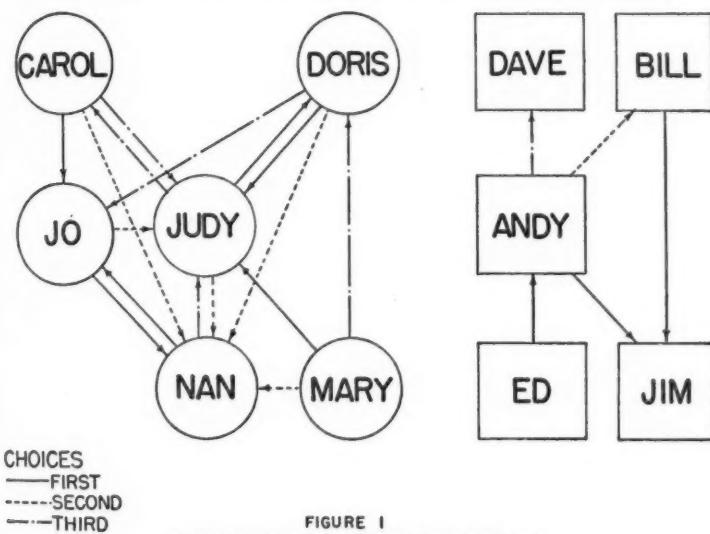
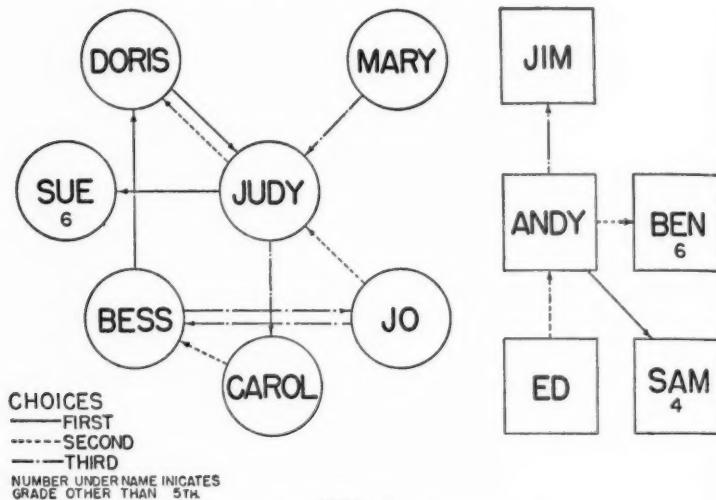


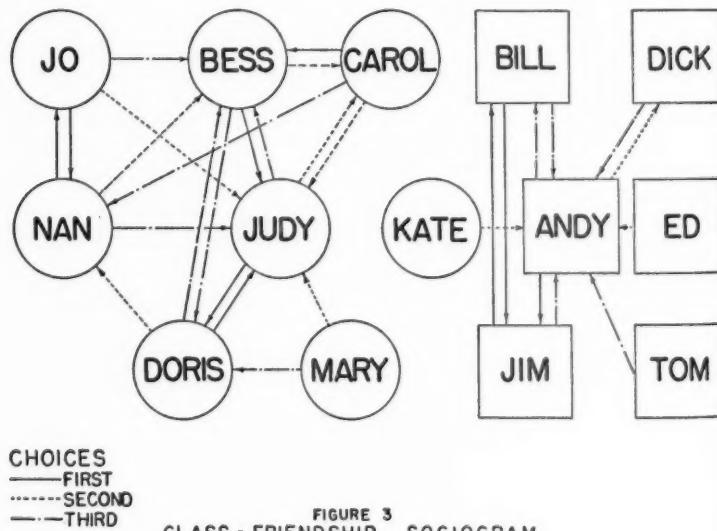
FIGURE 1
WORK-COMPANION SOCIOGRAM

A school-friendship sociogram was made to determine where Andy's friends might be found. Figure 2 shows that Andy chose as his third choice a boy from his class; the first and second choices were in the fourth and sixth grades respectively. Andy was chosen by Ed. In a second relationship with his classmates he was rejected and this time he rejected them also.

Figure 3, class-friendship sociogram, at first glance indicates acceptance of Andy as a friend on the part of five boys and one girl. Further study brought out that the boys who had chosen Andy were the ones whom he dominated, those whom he had been pushing around and making life miserable for in general.

FIGURE 2
SCHOOL-FRIENDSHIP SOCIOGRAM

Andy was not a first choice of this group. Evidently he had been chosen as a defense rather than companion. Ed remained true to Andy throughout, but in not one instance did Andy choose Ed.

FIGURE 3
CLASS-FRIENDSHIP SOCIOGRAM

In a questionnaire on attitudes toward school Andy stated that the grade repetition helped him to make friends.⁶ His evaluation of his popularity might be questioned in terms of the results of the friendship sociogram.

On the same questionnaire, Andy indicated that he preferred to be in the fifth grade and that he felt that repetition of the fifth grade was good for him. The principal had impressed upon him the desirability of repeating and had emphasized how much good it would do him. Perhaps this action influenced Andy's attitude.

Andy felt that his teachers did not understand him, a fact that his school experience easily justified. He also stated that retention in the fifth grade did not make him work any harder, that it did cause him to feel discouraged, and that it did not bring him greater enjoyment in school. However, he did say that he liked school and wanted to continue in school. These evaluations were exhibited in his daily behavior.

In answering the parent opinionnaire,⁷ Andy's parents expressed a similar attitude toward school. They agreed with Andy that his retention helped him to make friends. They believed, too, that the teachers did not understand their boy. Contrary to Andy's belief that retention in the fifth grade did not make him work any harder, his parents felt that repeating the grade helped to improve his work habits, but that he was still careless in his work. They believed that schools are good but would like to have more drill, less failure, and more interesting work included in the curriculum.

Retardation in the fifth grade has provided Andy with little or nothing to compensate for the observable harm that had been done him. He had become discouraged with lack of success, lost confidence in himself, and become more careless and less interested in school work. These are the obvious effects—the effects that he and others can recognize. The adjustment factors are of vital importance but cannot be observed by him. Neither in the classroom nor on the school grounds has Andy been successful

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Parent Opinionnaire," developed by the Research Committee, California School Supervisors Association, 1950.

with his peers. Aggression and attention-getting have become his pattern of behavior. These actions brought about nonacceptance on the part of his classmates, which in turn caused Andy's social relationships to become poorer.

How Nonpromotion Affected Judy

Although retention seldom benefits a pupil, the story of Judy indicates that under certain circumstances nonpromotion may be justifiable.

Although Judy is in the fifth grade, this is her sixth year in school. When she entered first grade she was five years and eight months old, shy, immature socially, and lacking in self-assurance. During her first year in school she learned to adjust to a group and to develop some confidence in herself.

Near the end of the school term, the principal and Judy's teacher requested that her parents meet with them to discuss Judy's adjustment and placement. Her mother and father were greatly interested and eager to participate in the conference. After giving consideration to retention and observing Judy in the classroom, her parents concurred with the teacher and principal and decided that retention would be best for Judy.

During the summer vacation, Judy's mother and father helped prepare her to be with the same teacher in the fall. As her experience during the first year had been pleasant, she was happy to return. Judy was glad she did not have to become acquainted with a new teacher.

In the next year she became more secure in her relationships with the other members of her class, lost some of her shyness, and began to have fun in schoolwork. In both social adjustment and academic achievement Judy made excellent progress.

In the fifth grade Judy became an outstanding pupil. She was calm and had an air of assurance as she worked either individually or as a member of a group. She had a good sense of humor, was a happy child, and joined freely with others in games and during play periods.

The work-companion sociogram, Figure 1, bears out Judy's acceptance as a good working pupil. She was chosen by five girls

as a person with whom they would like to work. Judy made her three choices from among these five, indicating a mutual acceptance on the part of these girls.

Figure 2, school-friendship sociogram, afforded the opportunity to view a picture of school relationships. Judy chose Sue, a sixth-grade girl as a first choice. Her other choices are in her own class. She was chosen by three girls in her class. These girls also chose Judy as a work-companion.

Friendships within her class are shown in Figure 3, class-friendship sociogram. Judy was chosen by six classmates. Among them are her steadfast friends: Doris, Carol, May, and Jo, who surround her upon all occasions.

Acceptance by classmates both in work and social groups provided Judy with the assurance every child needs. Many associates chose her upon all occasions. She was well accepted and has, as a result, the feeling of belonging.

Judy's reaction to the pupil questionnaire on attitudes toward school gave evidence of good adjustment to the class and showed no ill effects resulting from the retention in the early school years.⁸ On the questionnaire she said that she works harder, understands her work better, and has not been discouraged with herself. Her statements that she enjoys school more and has been able to make many friends are borne out by the sociogram.

On the parent opinionnaire, Judy's parents indicated that the retention had only positive results for their daughter. They felt that it helped her to increase her interest in school, increased her self-confidence and improved her work habits. Judy had been able to make more friends. The parents expressed great confidence in the school and seemed to feel that all school personnel had been fair and co-operative. In all respects they felt the same as Judy.⁹

The case of Judy bears evidence to the value of carefully planned retention. Many factors were studied before a decision on the case was made. Chronological age, social adjustment, emotional maturity, and the personality of the child were all taken

⁸ "Pupil Questionnaire," *op. cit.*

⁹ "Parent Opinionnaire," *op. cit.*

into consideration. The parents were consulted and helped to solve the problem. The tactful handling of the problem by the parents in preparing Judy for retention helped lead to Judy's success.

CONCLUSION

The first two cases cited in this article show that grade retention can be detrimental to children. Grade retention can cause many problems to develop. As a result of retention, George stuttered and lacked confidence in himself. He learned to fear trying because of failure. He had to receive the approval of others before he acted. As a result of retention, Andy became aggressive. He needed to prove his worth by talking and by holding the center of the stage. The effects of nonpromotion showed definitely in the behavior of both boys. It left neither in a position to enjoy the success and satisfaction that comes through a job well done.

Each boy made slight growth in educational achievement. Each would undoubtedly have gained as much in classrooms with children of his own age if the classroom work had been adjusted to his needs. Neither boy experienced good social relationships. Neither was accepted by his peers as a friend or a work companion. One evidenced his attitude by being submissive, the other by being aggressive.

Since the grade retention did not help George and Andy attain greater scholastic achievement than they had attained previously and did cause social and emotional maladjustments, it can be assumed that it did not serve its purpose. The boys would have undoubtedly been better adjusted if they had been promoted regularly. They would have had better opportunities for developing well-rounded personalities. They would probably have made as much achievement in school subjects with their original group.

In only a few situations is retention justifiable. Cases which are rather unusual should be carefully studied before retention is recommended. Everyone involved in making the decision to retain a pupil needs to feel sure that the effects will be beneficial.

After the decision has been made, evaluation should be used continuously to make sure that the decision is proving right for the pupil. Because of Judy's immaturity and social unreadiness, retention was beneficial for her. She was helped to make the adjustment she needed and school work became easy for her.

The Judys in schools are rare, but the Georges and Andys are common. Therefore, school people need continuously to examine the effects of their promotional policies in order to be sure that pupils are working at all times in situations which contribute to their total development.

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